

SHEILA ALVANELL JOHNSON
ARCHER-RAGSDALE ARIZONA CHAPTER TUSKEGEE AIRMEN INC



Sheila's exposure to the need for Diversity began as a child in segregated Mississippi. Using her childhood experiences as a motivating tool, she was proactive in creating a more culturally sensitive environment at The University of Mississippi, which was the hotbed of racial unrest during the Civil Rights Movement. Graduating from the university in 1986, Sheila began teaching at the local school district.

Throughout her career, Sheila met the need for educating students from underrepresented groups by forming Multicultural Committees, creating community outreach programs, developing culturally aware curriculum, and facilitating staff development sessions on cultural communication and learning styles.

Surprised her African-American students knew nothing of the contributions of African-Americans in aviation; Sheila created a military-style aviation public school program in 1996 in an effort to expose them to aviation and military careers. The program that began with thirty students eventually expanded to over three hundred participants caught the attention of numerous aviation and military organizations.

In 1998, Sheila was selected as the Air Force Association National Teacher of The Year (Christa McAuliffe Award), becoming the first African American to win the prestigious title. During that year, she also received the Mississippi Air Force Association Teacher of the Year Award, the Mississippi Board of Education's Excellence in Education Award, and The Southeastern Region Air Force Association Teacher of the Year Award. Her innovative teaching methods have been featured in *Early Childhood Educator*, and *Air Force Association* magazines.

In 1999 and 2000 respectively, Sheila became the recipient of the National Council of Negro Women's Southern Excellence in Teaching Award, was listed in "Who's Who Among American Women," and earned National Board Certification in the area of Early Adolescence/Social Studies-History, garnering her "Master Teacher" status in that field.

In 2001, Sheila became Director of Multicultural/International Students at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. After earning a M.A. in Education at Loras, she returned to teaching as an instructor for the Clayton County Public Schools District in Jonesboro, Georgia, where she was recognized with the "It Takes A Village" and "Star Teacher" awards for her role as Diversity and Community Outreach Coordinator for Adamson Middle School. In 2005, Sheila created the curriculum guide for the historical fiction novel about the Tuskegee Airmen, *A Sparrow Has Wings* by John Gibson. She is currently a Diversity Training Specialist-Consultant for a non-profit agency.

